

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for March 7, 2001

Agenda Items

- Design Development Briefing on Maintenance Base Facility
- Briefing on McClellan Long Span Guideway Design
- McClellan Station Design Update

Commissioners Present

Rick Sundberg, Chair
Jack Mackie
Don Royse
Mimi Sheridan
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
John Walser, Sound Transit
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign

The meeting began with introductions all around, and then moved into the first agenda item.

Design Development Briefing on the Maintenance Base Facility

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit

Greg Baldwin, ZGF

Mike Merrick, Sound Transit

We have taken the 30% work forward, after working closely with City staff and further developing the building program. Sound Transit's real estate division is proceeding with acquisition of the former Rainier Brewery property and Alaskan Copper. We'll be brief in the presentation since you (LRRP) were quite supportive and generous in your comments at 30%. Focusing on the changes since 30%, the highlights are:

- This is basically a shop building—in the best sense of the word! We want to invite the public to see what is going on in this building and on this site as part of understanding how systems work. We want the building to be express its function and yet not be "peculiar" or alien to its surroundings either.
- It will be visible in glimpses from I-5 and I-405, with the architectural mass facing Tully's (former Brewery) and the train yard between them.
- The site will house a train shop, public access areas, administration offices, services yard, and an entry ramp along an allee of trees.
- The truck repair is designed as a "glass box" and functions as a lantern of sorts. The ramp comes up and moves over the top of the box, allowing views down inside.
- There are also views to the Olympics from the top of the building.
- Landscaping includes an allee of columnar trees down the middle of the site, broader trees in the parking lot, some grassy areas including an outdoor eating space under a bosc of trees, and some hedges in holly or rosa rugosa.
- The building is designed to be built in phases if necessary. The 1st floor includes the repair shop where light rail vehicles pull in from the yard, and one less bay than before—the box is "tighter" now. 2nd floor includes the entrance lobby and area to look over the shop from above, plus electrical repair. 3rd floor is storage, signal/communication labs, and administrative offices. The top floor is more offices and a dining room.
- Another change is from trusses to column-supported mezzanine.

- The IDR questioned the use of brick, particularly not taking it completely to the ground, but applying it above the truck repair glass box. We feel it is appropriate in that it is clear it is cladding and not structural. Another question from IDR is whether the colors are too weak and should be stronger/more saturated.

Dan Corson explained the lighting concept showing how the monitors/clerestories might be lit at night. This is in keeping with the larger art gestures supported by LRRP. The lighting would be different colors and create a sense of mystery and intrigue, prompting people to wonder what the building is and what is going on inside it. We are aware that we need to be sensitive to energy issues too. The lit monitors would serve as a beacon. We have other ideas regarding the OCS poles, which we'll come back later.

Debora Ashland recapped some of the concerns and comments from the IDR, including:

- This is a good, strong project
- Show the panelized system of brick cladding—address the question of is it structural or not and whether it should extend to the ground or not
- Try different profiles and colors of metal siding—concerns re: keeping it clean, visual impact
- Concern about whether the clerestories will be an energy drain and make the building expensive to regulate for temperature and light
- Make more of an "event" with the canopy over the end of the ramp as it meets the building; more of a sense of arrival
- Question whether picnic area in the parking lot is really the best place for that type of use
- Very supportive of the art concept

Before proceeding to Panel discussion, Rick Sundberg asked Marilyn Senour to discuss the street vacation process that Sound Transit will participate in as part of obtaining permits for the Maintenance Base Facility. He added that the Design Commission has delegated the design review aspect of the street vacations to LRRP. LRRP will provide recommendations to City Council on the adequacy of the public benefit provided (as the Design Commission usually does), with City Council having the ultimate authority to grant the vacations or not.

Marilyn noted that the street vacation process can sometimes be a long one, which shouldn't be a worry for Sound Transit since construction of the Maintenance Base isn't expected until 2002. Policies that guide Seatran in the street vacation decisions address the public trust, land use impacts, and the provision of public benefit. She added that the public benefit discussion looks at the equity of exchanging one kind of public benefit—streets—for another kind. To date, City Council is quite supportive of the project, so we don't envision any problems.

Mike Merrick (Sound Transit) said that the real estate department in Sound Transit is handling street vacation petition, with Alaskan Copper as a joint petitioner. Marilyn acknowledged she had recently spoken with Warren Eckstrom about getting the petition in a week or so. Lee Kerns asked whether the public benefit is measured against the whole project (Link) or just this site (Maintenance Base)? Marilyn answered that it is measured against the specific site where streets are being vacated. Rick added that a standard has developed over time as the Design Commission has reviewed many of these vacation petitions. The Commission focuses on fine-grain urban design public benefit—as opposed to urban planning benefits. Mike asked if it made a difference in review if the streets being vacated aren't currently paved, to which Rick answered no. Those streets still belong to the public trust that we're trading away. There is a sort of quid pro quo

about this. It is up to Sound Transit to describe the benefit you're providing; it could be the allee of trees, the public access, etc. At this point the Panel proceeded with general discussion.

Discussion

- What could the workers from the surrounding area get out of it? What might the benefit be to Tully's employees, for example. *(These kind of facilities actually can get a lot of visitors on organized tours. How people around the site feel about it is a germane question. Is it not also appropriate to consider the expansion of the right-of-way in other areas, how that is impacting this area, and other qualities?)*
- We look for public benefit within the site and around the edges of the site. For example, what happens under the guideway, on the ground? Public benefit could be explored via public tours. Show the nine-block picture of how the vacations affect the area! What is it like at the pedestrian and bicyclist level? What is being provided to allow us to "release" the streets? *(The lobby brings people to the mezzanine for a view over the shop barn, which has a 3rd dimension to it.)*
- I applaud the direction Sound Transit has taken with this building. The lighting doesn't need to make the building more or less. As we may be able to answer our energy concerns over time, don't be entirely limited by today's energy constraints.
- I am happy with the brick detailing, and see no problem with it not reaching the ground. I'm reminded of some brick detailing that I saw in Finland with an Aalto building. This is a good material to use—durable. I liked the building at 30% and even more now at 60%.
- It is good to see an industrial building that isn't a barn. The entry sequence up the ramp or bridge actually starts on Airport Way—you might start there with the visual references to get people excited about what they are about to see.
- I have some concern about the metal paneling collecting dirt and dust. *(The dirt will settle in and create a contrast. I like that myself, but we'll look at other profiles.)*
- Last time we talked about somehow ensuring that the mechanical units on the roof don't ruin the clean design of the building. This will be visible from above. *(Yes, we're concerned about that too. We've got some mechanical on the upper roof and fans on the shop building.)*
- *What is the brick size? (We're considering various options.)*
- I'd like to see how the yard lighting affects the building lighting concept. Let the yard reinforce the other patterns; light the yard not the building. *(Yard lights will be heavily shielded to reduce glare.)*
- How about more lights but lower and on the OCS poles? The practical and aesthetic have to work together. Can you merge the task lighting and aesthetic lighting? *(We're looking at how to coordinate lights but haven't considered merging them. From a cost standpoint, the high lights work best. We have about 200 OCS poles, but they aren't located coincident with where we need light! We've found that most people looking over a site prefer high mast lighting because it is less obtrusive.)*
- I'm actually more concerned about the west side of the site—the yard there—than the larger east yard. Don't let the yard lighting compete with the building art lighting.
- Make sure the building works with just task lighting and not depend on the artistic lighting—what if we can't resolve our energy issues and that continues to be a concern? *(Then I'd like to find other ways to preserve the idea.)*
- The train vehicles themselves are pieces of architecture! Treat them as such, and as part of the composition of the train yard. *(Yes, in Portland the trains really change the sense of scale and mass in the city; there is real "theatre" there at night with the train cars.)*

Action

The Panel thanks ZGF and Sound Transit for a project well done, and recommends approval as presented with strong support for the architectural direction taken. For the next phase of design, the Panel suggests further consideration of:

- ***Extending the entrance concept visually to Airport Way;***
- ***The lighting concept; specifically how it can be designed to work in tandem with yard lighting and other building task lighting, to be as energy-efficient as possible, and if necessary, to consider other alternatives to achieving the same effect if energy concerns preclude the present concept from going forward;***
- ***More definition in the public areas of the building interior and how they work with the rest of the building and site; and***
- ***The color and profile of the metal cladding.***

The Panel also requests a separate presentation on the street vacation petition to address public benefits provided in exchange for the vacation of streets. Sound Transit is further advised to work with CityDesign and Seatran staff to prepare for the presentation.

Briefing on McClellan Long Span Guideway

John Walser, Sound Transit

At 30% the issues of the guideway column located in the Cheasty right-of-way and the two C-bent structures was raised by the City, LRRP, and the community; all with concerns about the visual impacts of those structures. The consultant team took another look at the design and developed a long span option that eliminates both C-bents and the Cheasty column. The major challenge was how to avoid underground utilities, of which there are many, in the area. This resulted in a need to move the street (MLK) further west, and consequently slightly larger property takes. Another consideration we worked around is the community's desire to not preclude any future connection to Mt. Baker Boulevard—this new design meets that goal. Guideway enhancements will be further developed later, with the next phase of consultant work.

Discussion

- Are there sound walls on the guideway? *(Yes. Since there is strong potential for multi-family housing development in the future, we want to plan now for having sound walls, and also mitigating the visual impacts of sound walls on the guideway. It isn't required by the EIS, but likely would be in the future.)*
- This is a great improvement! Thank you very much for going back to resolve these issues.
- There seem to be two images on the perspective drawings—one with, and one without, and sidewalk along Cheasty. *(Yes, we did that on purpose to show some alternatives. There are various path options we're considering with the community and with Seatran.)*
- It does seem that a pedestrian path to the light rail station from Beacon Hill is logical.
- This is a huge improvement, thanks.

No formal action was taken.

McClellan Station Design Update

Cheryl updated the Panel on the work group now forming with City and Sound Transit staff to resolve outstanding issues around the McClellan station design. She added that Sound Transit has prepared a memo for City signature describing the decisions and design work agreed upon to date, and suggested that the Panel review the letter to ensure they are also in agreement with its contents. Amy Glenn provided additional detail on the work group, saying that it will continue through the spring to discuss traffic progression and access off Rainier Avenue, within the town center, and off Cheasty/Winthrop. Jack noted that while the Panel has approved the latest McClellan design work, it should be noted in the response to Sound Transit that each approval also carried with it a request for additional design refinement of various items for 90% review. Cheryl asked Panel members to review the Sound Transit memo and get back to her with any other comments by early next week. The Panel asked that their formal actions be attached to the response as an appendix item. John Walser said that sounded reasonable, and that Sound Transit's intent with the memo is simply not to revisit old decisions already made.

LRRP Business

Meeting notes for January 31, 2001 were reviewed and approved as written.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.